

**ADDENDUM TO THE  
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE INVESTIGATION STANDARDS**

**Issued June 25, 2004**

**REFERRAL TO VOLUNTARY SERVICES**

**Purpose:** To assure that the CPS agency, when appropriate, gives a family information regarding voluntary preventive resources in the community and supports them in accessing such services when the family does not need or no longer needs agency CPS services. In addition, this policy addresses making an offer of voluntary services and information and referral services to those families screened out at intake for those CPS agencies that by policy or practice offer voluntary services to screened out referrals.

**Applicability of the Policy:**

This applies to referrals the local agency receives alleging what the reporter believes to be child abuse or neglect and cases the agency is assessing or serving based on concerns of child maltreatment or threatened child maltreatment. It applies at the points where the agency makes the decision to not provide services: Intake, Initial Assessment, and Case Progress Evaluation.

**Policy:**

Intake

No referral to community or voluntary resources is required at intake, as generally insufficient information is known from a report to make an appropriate referral to community services. If the agency screens out the report but decides to make an offer of services, then the agency has initiated a voluntary service (assessment and referral). This is an optional service; county agencies and BMCW are not required to provide outreach services to cases that are screened out at intake. [Note: This action on the part of the CPS agency can be considered a referral to voluntary services only if the interview or home visit with the family is conducted with the sole purpose of offering to provide or refer to voluntary services.]

An offer of voluntary services should be made in the form of a phone call to the family to offer services the agency has or services that are available in the community that the family is free to refuse without any repercussions. Any follow-up with the family subsequent to the phone call would be at the family's request.

If the agency decides to initiate the offer of services by making a home visit that the family has not requested, the caseworker should document in the record why he or she did not first make a phone call. If the agency makes an offer of services through a letter to the family, caution should be taken to assure that the content of the letter is crafted to minimize any negative reactions within the family that might endanger a family member (e.g., cases where domestic violence might be a concern).

Initial Assessment and Case Progress Evaluation/Case Closure

If an agency decides to close a case following an Initial Assessment or Case Progress Evaluation, the agency will:

- Provide the family with information about resources that, based on the completed assessment and the family's request, are appropriate to meet the family's support and service needs.

- Give thorough, easy to understand information on the resources available, how they might help the family, and how the family may access those services. These resources may include services in other counties, but agencies are not required to maintain current information on services in other counties.
- Give sufficient information to help the family members make their own choices (e.g., information regarding faith-based status, payment structure, area of specialty of provider, flexible hours).
- Assist the family to access/connect with a chosen resource, if the family requests. Generally, this responsibility would not go beyond the family's first contact with the resource.
- When identifying service needs in the case closing documentation, clarify that these needs do not require CPS intervention and that safety of the child(ren) is being provided for and managed by the parents/caregivers.
- If there is an identified service need not related to CPS responsibilities but no resource to meet that need, or the resource is not accessible (e.g., waiting lists, available only as a court-ordered service, distance or location prohibitive), discuss this openly with the family.
- Extend an offer to the family to re-contact the agency if they need some help.
- Clearly document all of the above in the case record.

If an agency decides to discontinue the case as a CPS case following an Initial Assessment but open the case, at the family's request, for other agency services that are not needed to control threats to the child's safety or manage risks related to child abuse or neglect, the agency has thereby referred the family to voluntary community services. This also must be documented in the closing narrative of the Initial Assessment.